TYPES AND CRITERIA OF ASSESSING SPEAKING SKILL

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Abstract: Assessing speaking skills is an important aspect of foreign language learning. This article examines the different types and criteria for assessing speaking skills.Firstly, the types of assessment are discussed, including diagnostic, formative, and summative assessment. Secondly, the key criteria for assessing speaking skills are analyzed, such as fluency, accuracy, complexity, and interactivity. This article emphasizes the importance of a comprehensive approach to speaking assessment, considering various types and criteria to provide a thorough analysis of learners' language abilities.

Keywords: Diagnostic assessments, Formative assessments, Summative assessments, Interactivity, Accuracy, Fluency, complexity.

The ability to speak a foreign language effectively is a crucial skill for successful communication and academic or professional advancement. As Fulcher stated assessment of speaking skill is challenging task. Because oral production is production of one's creativity. Thus, speaking assessment criteria should touch specific features. [1] As Brown mentioned speaking is a productive skill that can be directly and practically observed. [2]

The discussion first outlines the primary types of assessment, including diagnostic, formative, and summative evaluations. It then delves into the specific criteria used to assess speaking proficiency, such as fluency, accuracy, complexity, and interactivity. This article underscores the importance of adopting a multifaceted approach to speaking assessment in order to obtain a well-rounded understanding of learners' communicative competence.

Types of Speaking Assessments

When evaluating speaking proficiency, language instructors and program administrators utilize three primary types of assessment: diagnostic, formative, and summative.

Diagnostic assessments are conducted at the beginning of a language course or program to determine learners' current speaking abilities and identify any specific strengths or weaknesses. These assessments provide a baseline understanding of

students' proficiency levels, which can then inform instructional planning and target areas for improvement. Diagnostic tests often take the form of oral interviews, role-plays, or picture descriptions that allow learners to demonstrate their communicative skills in a low-stakes environment.

Formative assessments are administered throughout the learning process to monitor students' ongoing progress and guide continued skill development. These assessments may include in-class presentations, group discussions, or impromptu speaking tasks that enable teachers to provide targeted feedback and support. Formative evaluations emphasize the learning process rather than final outcomes, helping both instructors and learners identify areas needing further practice.[3]

Summative assessments serve to measure learners' overall speaking proficiency at the end of a course or program. These high-stakes evaluations, such as oral exams or proficiency interviews, determine whether students have achieved the established learning objectives and outcomes. Summative assessments are typically used for purposes of placement, promotion, or certification, providing a comprehensive evaluation of students' communicative competence.[4]

Criteria for Assessing Speaking Skill

Regardless of the type of speaking assessment employed, language educators generally utilize a set of common criteria to evaluate learners' oral communication abilities. These key criteria include fluency, accuracy, complexity, and interactivity.

Fluency refers to the ease and flow of speech, encompassing factors such as speech rate, hesitation, and pausing. Assessors examine how smoothly and effortlessly learners are able to express their ideas without significant interruptions or breakdowns in communication.

Accuracy focuses on the correctness of language use, including grammar, vocabulary, and pronunciation. Evaluators assess the extent to which students employ the target language structures and forms appropriately and with minimal errors.[5]

The criterion of **complexity** looks at the sophistication of language used by learners, considering factors such as sentence structure, discourse organization, and range of vocabulary and expressions. Higher levels of complexity reflect a more advanced command of the target language.

Interactivity evaluates learners' ability to engage in meaningful and natural conversation, including their capacity to initiate, respond to, and sustain interactions. This criterion examines how effectively students navigate the dynamics of communication, such as turn-taking, clarification, and negotiation of meaning.

In conclusion, by employing a balanced approach to speaking assessment, leveraging both the types of evaluation and the criteria for assessment, language programs can ensure that learners are acquiring the necessary oral communication skills to effectively engage with the target language. This holistic approach to speaking

assessment supports the ultimate goal of developing confident, competent, and communicatively successful language learners.

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